



SCP Operations Handbook

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Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

PREFACE

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is an independent, federal grant-making government agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. For almost 20 years, CNCS—through its programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF), and Social Innovation Fund (SIF)—has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action. CNCS provides grants to national and local nonprofits, schools, government agencies, faith-based and other community organizations and other groups committed to strengthening their communities through volunteering.

This Senior Companion Program Operations Handbook (Handbook) provides ideas and suggestions for effective practices in operating and managing many aspects of local SCP projects. It is a technical assistance document and not a compliance guide. Many of the suggestions refer to specific sections of the federal regulations that govern SCP, but the Handbook does not address all issues covered in the regulations. Sponsors and project directors are required to follow the SCP Federal Regulations, published in [Title 45, Chapter XXV, Part 2551](#), of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Sponsors and project directors with concerns or questions with respect to compliance should first consult the federal regulations, the terms and conditions of the grant award, and, if necessary, contact the appropriate CNCS State Office.

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Upon request, this material will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities.

1.3.4 HISTORY OF SCP

The 1960 White House Conference on Aging highlighted the need for all older people to stay active which could be done through service to their country. The conference led to the passage of the Older Americans Act of 1965 under which several pilot demonstration programs were initiated including the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs.

While the Foster Grandparent Program was developed in 1965, it was not until 1968 that the Senior Companion Program began as a demonstration project at the Administration on Aging, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, with a goal for low-income older adults to help their more frail peers remain independent in their homes.

In 1971 President Nixon created the ACTION agency to provide coordination of all government sponsored volunteer programs and in 1973, he asked Congress to expand the role of low income older volunteers to provide person-to-person services and the Senior Companion Program was officially launched.

In 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was established, merging the work and staffs of two agencies: ACTION; and the Commission on National and Community Service. The CNCS mission was to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation.

On April 21, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the [Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act](#), which reauthorized and expanded national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service. It also lowered the age eligibility from 60 to 55 and increased income eligibility to 200% of the poverty level.

1.3.5 AMERICORPS

Since its founding in 1994, AmeriCorps engages Americans in intensive service at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country tackling pressing problems and mobilizing millions of volunteers for the organizations they serve through three programs: [AmeriCorps State and National](#) , [AmeriCorps VISTA](#), and [AmeriCorps NCCC](#) (National Civilian Community Corps). AmeriCorps members recruit, train, and supervise community volunteers, tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, help communities respond to disasters, and build the capacity of nonprofit groups to become self-sustaining, among many other activities. In exchange for a term of service, members earn a living allowance and a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that can be used to pay for college or graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans.

1.3.6 SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND

Authorized by the [Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in April of 2009](#), the [Social Innovation Fund](#) is a program of CNCS that empowers organizations to identify and support sustainable solutions that are already making a significant impact in transforming communities.

With the simple but vital goal of finding what works, and making it work for more people, the Social Innovation Fund and its' grantees create a learning network of organizations working to implement innovative and effective evidence-based solutions to local and national challenges in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.

- Where can I find information about required National Service Criminal History Checks?
[National Service Criminal History Checks](#)
- Where can I find information about days of service?
[Special Initiatives](#)
- Where can I find information about the changes in the OMB Circulars?
[Uniform Guidance](#)
- I work for a faith-based organization. Are we eligible to apply for CNCS grants?
[Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships](#)
- I'm interested in promoting your programs to my organization's constituents. Where can I order brochures or other promotional materials?
[Outreach Resources](#)
[Marketing and Media](#)
[Senior Corps Branding Guidelines](#)
- How do I find Senior Corps programs in my own community?
[National Service in Your State](#)
- I'm a grantee and am looking for Senior Corps photos to use in our brochures. Where can I find them?
[Outreach Resources](#)
[Marketing and Media](#)
[Logos](#)
- Where can I find resources for working with Veterans and Military Families?
[Veterans and Military Families](#)

1.4.2.3 Partnerships and Program Support

OEA develops and manages partnerships and alliances that strengthen the impact and broaden the reach of national service. It is authorized to solicit and accept private donations which support CNCS programs and initiatives. Additionally, OEA takes the lead in producing many events connected to the agency's signature projects such as the [Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service](#), [Senior Corps Week](#), the [September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance](#), [Mayor, County, and Tribal Recognition Day for National Service](#) and [AmeriCorps Week](#).

In 2015, the Office of External Affairs developed an annual engagement calendar that promotes monthly activities, events and media related to our programmatic focus areas and partnerships that make service and social innovation possible.

National and Community Service Initiatives

CNCS encourages participation in community-wide service activities. OEA works with CNCS programs to support both our signature projects such as MLK Day of Service, as well as other national service initiatives like the September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance, Mayor and County Recognition Day for National Service, Opening Day for National Service, Veterans Corps, and Senior

2 PROJECT OPERATIONS

2.1 ELIGIBILITY, AWARDS, AND SPONSORSHIP

2.1.1 Sponsor Eligibility

The CNCS awards federal SCP grants to public agencies, Indian Tribes, and secular and faith-based private non-profit organizations in the United States, that have authority to accept and the capacity to administer SCP projects.

2.1.2 Solicitation of Proposals

When federal SCP grants are available CNCS conducts a grant competition. A Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) is issued when funding for a grant competition has been appropriated by Congress (or a Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) is issued when funding for a grant competition is anticipated but not yet available). The NOFA or NOFO may also be referred to as the “*Notice*” in application related instructions. Any eligible agency or organization may apply for an SCP grant. Notices are posted at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and at the [Funding Opportunities](https://www.fundingopportunities.gov) on CNCS website [NationalService.gov](https://www.nationalservice.gov). Notices will be shared broadly through national and local networks.

2.1.3 Submission of a Grant Application

Grant applications are submitted in the CNCS electronic grants system. Applications are submitted following the *Notice* instructions and using the forms included with the *Invitation to Apply* and *Notice* on the [Funding Opportunities](https://www.fundingopportunities.gov) webpage. The application must be submitted by a representative of the sponsor who is authorized by its governing body to certify that all data in the application are true and correct, the application has been duly authorized by the governing body of the applicant, and the applicant will comply with the Assurances submitted with the application, if the assistance is awarded. (See [Appendix A.1](#) and [Appendix A.2](#) to review the Assurances and Certifications.)

2.1.4 “Self-Sponsored” Projects

In some situations, project staff, advisory councils, boards, or other interested persons, have incorporated as an independent non-profit organization and successfully competed to become a sponsor. These so-called “self-sponsored” projects must meet all the administrative and programmatic requirements associated with sponsorship addressed in the program regulations. CNCS neither encourages nor discourages self-sponsorship, but recommends that groups considering this option fully explore the advantages and disadvantages applicable to their situation and consult with other organizations who have taken this step. Contact your [CNCS State Office](#) for further information.

2.2 SPONSOR RESPONSIBILITIES

2.2.1 Regulations Requirements

The sponsor is legally responsible for fulfilling all project management responsibilities necessary to accomplish the purposes of the program and may not delegate or contract these responsibilities to another entity. Sponsor responsibilities are listed in [45 CFR 2551 Subpart B](#) of the SCP regulations. A few key responsibilities are listed here:

- 1) Focus Senior Companion resources on critical problems that affect frail older adults and other adults with special needs within the project service area and in compliance with CNCS performance measure requirements.
- 2) Ensure that National Service Criminal History Checks are conducted according to CNCS's requirements and the sponsor's written policy for every Senior Companion and covered staff (see [National Criminal Checks Resources](#) webpage, Chapter 8, and [Appendix A.12: NSCHC Supplement](#) for further details).
- 3) Assess, in collaboration with other community organizations or through utilization of an existing assessment, the needs of the client population in the community and develop strategies to respond to those needs using Senior Companion resources.
- 4) Annually assess the accomplishments and impact of the project on the identified needs and problems of the client population in the community.
- 5) Develop and manage a system of volunteer stations to provide placement opportunities that appeal to persons age 55 and over by:
 - a) Ensuring that a volunteer station is a public agency, Indian Tribe, or non-profit private organization, whether secular or faith-based, or an eligible proprietary health care agency, that has the capacity to serve as a volunteer station. (Proprietary health care organizations are health care facilities that are privately owned and operated for profit. Refer to Chapter 6 for more information about volunteers at health care agencies and volunteer stations.)
 - b) Ensuring the placement of SCP volunteers is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the sponsor and each volunteer station. (See *Preparation of the Memorandum of Understanding* in Chapter 6, for more information.)
 - c) Complying with and ensuring that all volunteer stations comply with all applicable civil rights laws and regulations, including providing reasonable accommodation, where appropriate, to qualified individuals with disabilities to serve or participate in the SCP project. (See [Appendix A.4](#), *Primer on Civil Rights Compliance*.)
 - d) Developing service opportunities to support locally-identified needs of eligible clients in a way that considers the skills and experiences of Senior Companions and meets the performance outputs and outcomes approved in the grant application.
- 6) Make special efforts to recruit and place into SCP volunteer service individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, or degrees of English language proficiency, Veterans and military family members, persons with disabilities, and hard-to-reach populations and groups in the community which are underrepresented in the project. The sponsor should stress the recruitment and enrollment of persons not already volunteering.
- 7) Provide SCP volunteers with:
 - a) Assignments that show direct and demonstrable benefits to clients, the community served, the Senior Companions, and the volunteer station;

this body. Depending on local community circumstances, the advisory council may be used by the sponsor to:

- Assist in assessing community needs;
- Assist in fund raising and resource development;
- Support the development of a service ethic in the community;
- Advise on volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition strategies;
- Suggest candidates for project staff positions;
- Link the project with other community service resources, including faith-based organizations;
- Advise on data collection and performance measurement;
- Assess project accomplishments and impact, including progress toward meeting performance measures;
- Assess satisfaction of volunteers and volunteer stations;
- Suggest ways the project can gain increased visibility and recognition in the community; and/or
- Advise on how trends in the community are affecting seniors.

SCP projects should keep thorough records of advisory council participation and structure such as the group's bylaws, current membership, and meeting minutes. Additional resources on [Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of Advisory Councils](#) can be found on the Knowledge Network.

4.2.3 Membership

Remember, an effective advisory council can expand the capacity of the sponsor and project staff. The advisory council must have a membership that includes people [\[45 CFR 2551.24\]](#):

- Knowledgeable of human and social needs of the community;
- Competent in the field of community service and volunteerism;
- Capable of helping the sponsor meet its administrative and program responsibilities including project assessment, fund-raising, publicity, and data reporting requirements;
- With interest in and knowledge of the capability of older adults;
- Who are of a diverse composition that reflects the demographics of the service area.

Additional resources on [Building an Effective Advisory Council](#) can be found on the Knowledge Network.

4.2.4 Allowability of Costs

As advisory councils are required by Senior Corps regulations, grantees may expend reasonable amounts to support their activities. Such costs should still meet all other aspects of OMB cost

6 VOLUNTEER STATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

SCP volunteers are recruited and enrolled by the SCP project and placed with or through volunteer stations. Volunteer stations are encouraged to support SCP by referring prospective volunteers to the project.

6.1.1 Characteristics of Volunteer Stations

A volunteer station is a public agency, secular or faith-based private non-profit organization, or proprietary health care organization that accepts the responsibility for assignment and supervision of SCP volunteers. Each volunteer station must be licensed or otherwise certified, when required, by the appropriate state or local government. Neither informal groups nor private homes qualify as volunteer stations. [[45 CFR 2551.12\(w\)](#)]

- A. The Memorandum of Understanding with such volunteer stations must include detailed provisions to ensure compliance with program regulations regarding *Non-displacement of Employed Workers and Non-impairment of Contracts for Service* [[45 CFR 1216.1.1 - 1216.1.4](#)]
- B. Individual private homes may not be volunteer stations. In-home assignments are made only through a volunteer station (see *In-Home Assignments* in Chapter 7).
- C. Volunteer stations are located within the project's service area as defined in the approved grant application.
- D. Senior Companions should not be assigned to nursing homes or other long-term care facilities as volunteer stations, but may continue to serve an existing client during periods of short-term care in these facilities.
- E. Proprietary health care organizations are health care facilities that are privately owned and operated for profit. As noted above, licensed proprietary health-care organizations may be volunteer stations. All such placements must limit volunteer assignments to those which provide direct and traditional assistance to patients, such as visiting, teaching, counseling, entertaining, etc. Placements must not displace paid employees, must not supplant the hiring of paid employees, and must avoid other staff or clerical assignments which would accrue to the profitability of the proprietary health-care organization.

6.1.2 Types of Volunteer Stations

Senior Companions should be placed with stations where they can provide supportive, individualized services to help older adults with special needs to maintain their dignity and independence.

Potential volunteer stations include but are not limited to the following types of agencies or organizations, if they serve eligible clients as defined in the SCP regulations: (See [45 CFR 2551.81](#))

13 SCP HANDBOOK CROSS REFERENCE INDEX

URL Links and Appendices Documents by Chapter

This index lists the links and appendices documents that are included in the SCP Handbook for easy reference. The chart lists the chapter, the name of the link, the complete URL that you can click or cut-and-paste into your browser, and the number and title of the appendix document.

Links to [SCP Program Regulations](#): All of the Handbook chapters have links to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. The regulations governing SCP are in Chapter XXV, Part 2551, of the Code of Federal Regulations which is typically cited as “45 CFR 2551.” Use the reference numbers in the link to find the specific regulation you need. (For example: [45 CFR 2551.22](#) refers to the *Responsibilities of SCP Sponsors*.)

URL for 45 CFR 2551:

<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=99f8e15d953a2684bc6267b117b9713a&rgn=div5&view=text&node=45:4.1.9.11.3.3&idno=45>

Chapter 1	
AmeriCorps NCCC webpage	http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/ameriCorps-nccc
AmeriCorps Programs webpage	http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps
AmeriCorps State & National webpage	http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/ameriCorps-state-and-national
AmeriCorps VISTA webpage	http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/ameriCorps-vista
CNCS Electronic Grants System	http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/egrants
CNCS Logo webpage	http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/outreach-resources/logos
CNCS National Performance Measures	http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement
CNCS Strategic Plan	http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan
Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act	http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1990-serviceact_as%20amended%20through%20pl%20111-13.pdf
eGrants Helpdesk/ National Service Hotline	http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/egrants
Evaluation Resources	http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation
Evidence Exchange	http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/evidence-exchange
Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships	http://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/communities/faith-based-and-other-community-initiatives-and-neighborhood
Federal Register	

Appendix A.1 - Assurances

Section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act of 1955, as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.); (g) protection of underground sources of drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, as amended (P.L. 93-523); and (h) protection of endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (P.L. 93-205).

- Will comply with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) related to protecting components or potential components of the national wild and scenic rivers system.
- Will assist the awarding agency in assuring compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470), EO 11593 (identification and protection of historic properties), and the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 469a-1 et seq.).
- Will comply with P.L. 93-348 regarding the protection of human subjects involved in research, development, and related activities supported by this award of assistance.
- Will comply with the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-544, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 2131 et seq.) pertaining to the care, handling, and treatment of warm blooded animals held for research, teaching, or other activities supported by this award of assistance.
- Will comply with the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 4801 et seq.) which prohibits the use of lead based paint in construction or rehabilitation of residence structures.
- Will cause to be performed the required financial and compliance audits in accordance with the Single Audit Act of 1984, as amended, and OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations.
- Will comply with all applicable requirements of all other Federal laws, executive orders, regulations, application guidelines, and policies governing this program.

For AmeriCorps State and National Applicants ONLY

*If you are not applying for a grant through AmeriCorps*State and National, you may ignore this section.*

1. Will comply with all rules regarding prohibited activities, including those stated in applicable Notice, grant provisions, and program regulations, and will ensure that no assistance made available by the Corporation will be used to support any such prohibited activities.
2. Will comply with the nondiscrimination provisions in the national service laws, which provide that an individual with responsibility for the operation of a project or program that receives assistance under the national service laws shall not discriminate against a participant in, or member of the staff of, such project or program on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, political affiliation, disability, or on the basis of religion. (NOTE: the prohibition on religious discrimination does not apply to the employment of any staff member paid with non- Corporation funds or paid with Corporation funds but employed with the organization operating the project prior to or on the date the grant was awarded. If your organization is a faith-based organization that makes hiring decisions on the basis of religious belief, your organization may be entitled, under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000bb, to receive federal funds and yet maintain that hiring practice, even though the national service legislation includes a restriction on religious discrimination in employment of staff hired to work on a Corporation-funded project and paid with Corporation grant funds. (42 U.S.C. §§ 5057(c) and 12635(c)). For the circumstances under which this may occur, please see the document “Effect of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act on Faith-Based Applicants for Grants” on the Corporation’s website at: <http://www.usdoj.gov/archive/fbci/effect-rfra.pdf>.
3. Will comply with all other federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination, including any self-evaluation requirements. These include but are not limited to: (a) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin; (b) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended (20 U.S.C. 1681-1683, and 1685-1686), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex; (c) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 794), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicaps (d) The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (42 U.S.C. 6101-6107), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age; (e) The Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-255), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of drug abuse; (f) The Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-616), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of alcohol abuse or alcoholism; (g) sections 523 and 527 of the Public Health Service Act of 1912 (42 U.S.C. 290 dd-3 and 290 ee-3), as amended, relating to confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records; (h) Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination in the sale, rental or financing of housing; and (i) the requirements of any other nondiscrimination statute(s) which may apply to the application.
4. Will provide, in the design, recruitment, and operation of any AmeriCorps program, for broad-based input from – (1) the community served, the municipality and government of the county (if appropriate) in which the community is located, and potential participants in the program; and (2) community-based agencies with a demonstrated record of